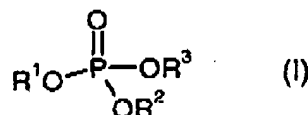


Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) ~~Process~~ A process for the separation of dichlorobenzene mixtures containing m- and p-dichlorobenzene wherein:
~~by extractive rectification comprising contacting~~

(i) ~~the mixture with is as an extracting agent, separating components of the mixture into an m-dichlorobenzene and p-dichlorobenzene containing fraction and finally separating the extracting agent from one of the fractions obtained, characterized in that the extracting agent used is~~ contacted with a phosphoric ester of the general formula (I) as an extracting agent



in which R¹, R² and R³ are identical or different and represent an aliphatic or cycloaliphatic alkyl or alkenyl radical and R¹, R² and R³ together contain at least 3 C-atoms and not more than 12 C-atoms, or a mixture of different phosphoric esters (I) of formula or is contacted with ~~of this type or~~ a phosphine oxide of the general formula (II) as an extracting agent



in which R¹, R² and R³ are identical or different and represent an aliphatic or cycloaliphatic alkyl or alkylene radical or hydrogen, and R¹, R² and R³ together contain at least 3 C-atoms and not more than 12 C-atoms, or a mixture of different phosphine oxides of formula (II) this type or a mixture of said phosphoric esters of formula (I) and phosphine oxides of formula (II), and subsequently

(ii) the components of the mixture are separated into a m-dochlorobenzene- and a p-dichlorobenzene-containing fraction, and finally

(iii) the extracting agent is separated from one of the fractions obtained.

2. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that, in~~ the formula (I) or (II) for the extracting agent, R^1 , R^2 and R^3 are identical or different and represent a radical selected from the group consisting of methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, isopropyl, n-butyl, tert-butyl, n-pentyl, and sec-butyl.

3. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that the extracting agent used is~~ triethyl phosphate, tripropylphosphine oxide, or tributylphosphine oxide alone or as a mixture.

4. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the separation is carried out in a rectification column, wherein pressure at the top of the column is in the range of 5 to 100 hPa and pressure difference between the bottom of the column and the top of the column being 0 to 100 hPa and optionally the number of theoretical plates being 20 to 200.

5. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 4, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the pressure at the top of the column is 5 to 30 hPa and the pressure difference between the bottom of the column and the top of the column is 0 to 20 hPa and optionally the number of theoretical plates is 60 to 120.

6. (Currently Amended) Process according to any of Claim 1, wherein a ~~characterized in that~~ weight ratio of mass flow of reflux to distillate is 1:1 to 20:1, ~~in particular 3:1 to 8:1.~~

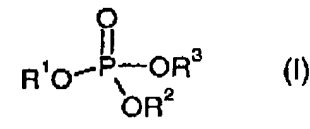
7. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 1, ~~wherein a~~ characterized in that weight ratio of mass flow of feed of the extracting agent to feed of the m-dichlorobenzene and p-dichlorobenzene mixture is 2:1 to 40:1, ~~in particular 6:1 to 12:1.~~

8. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 1, ~~wherein characterized in~~ that the separation of m- and p-dichlorobenzene and ~~recovery~~ the separation of the extracting agent is carried out in a rectification column, with a side-stream column being connected to the rectification column via a vapor ~~vapour~~ side-stream take-off for recovery of the extracting agent.

9. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 1, ~~wherein characterized in~~ that a melt crystallization ~~for fine purification of the desired isomer, of the m-~~ dichlorobenzene or p-dichlorobenzene, is provided downstream of the extractive rectification.

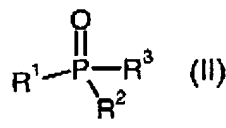
10. (Currently Amended) A process for conducting extractive ~~distillation~~ rectification comprising providing phosphoric esters and phosphine oxides, as extracting agents for the extractive rectification.

11. (Currently Amended) ~~The A~~ process for conducting extractive ~~distillation~~ rectification comprising providing phosphoric esters and phosphine oxides of the formulae (I) or (II); ~~as recited in Claim 1,~~



in which R¹, R² and R³ are identical or different and represent an aliphatic or cycloaliphatic alkyl or alkenyl radical and R¹, R² and R³ together contain at least 3 C-

atoms and not more than 12 C-atoms, or a mixture of different phosphoric esters of formula (I); and



in which R¹, R² and R³ are identical or different and represent an aliphatic or cycloaliphatic alkyl or alkylene radical or hydrogen, and R¹, R² and R³ together contain at least 3 C-atoms and not more than 12 C-atoms, or a mixture of different phosphine oxides of formula (II) or a mixture of said phosphoric esters of formula (I) and phosphine oxides of formula (II), as extracting agents for the extractive rectification.